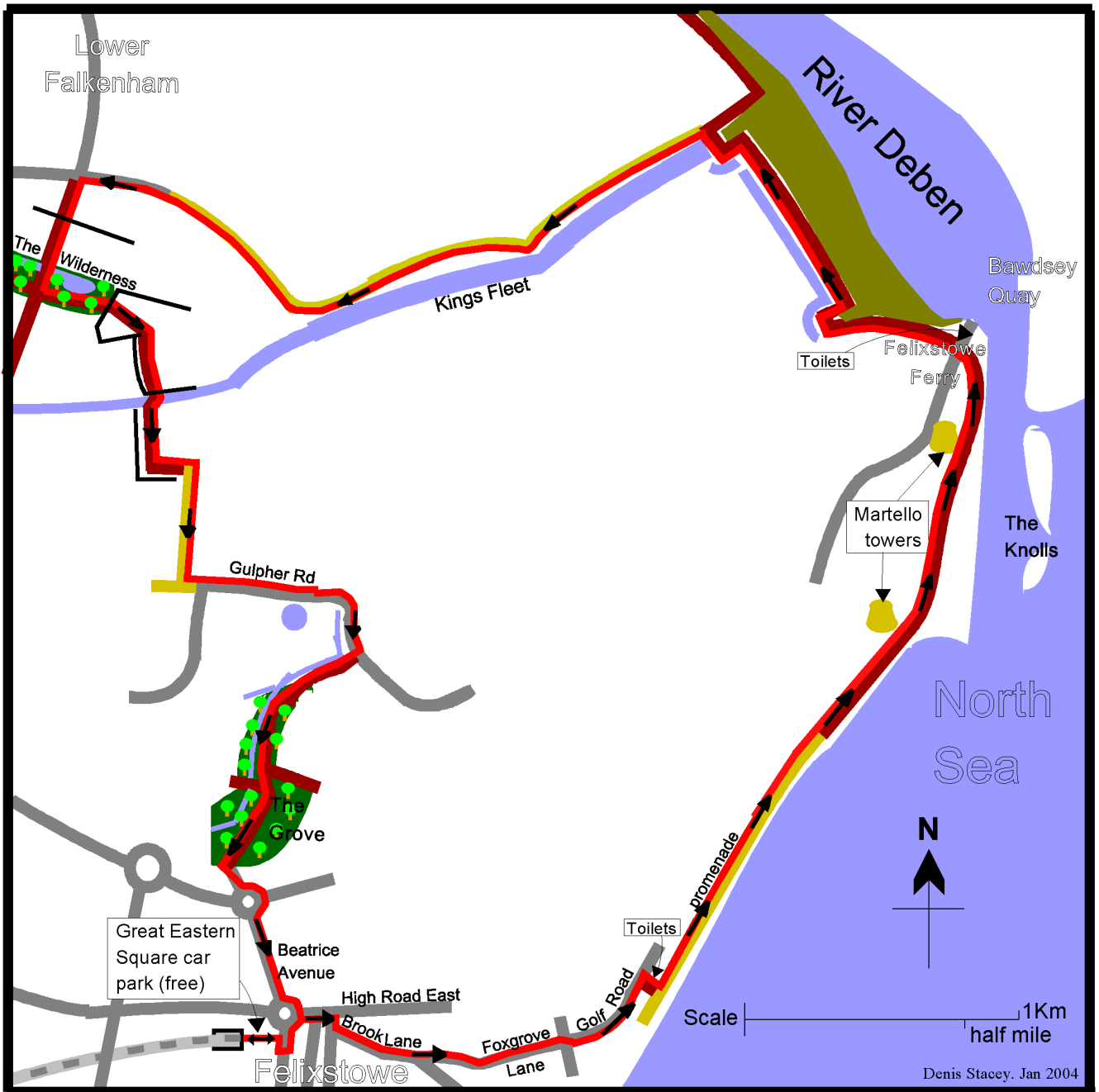


Walk 1 - Felixstowe Station - Ferry - Kings Fleet

A Walk by Sue and Jim Stacey.



Start/End: Felixstowe Station

This is well served by Anglia Railways, making the walk available to all. The journey between Ipswich or Westerfield and Felixstowe is very pleasant with good views over Ipswich town as it crosses the Spring Road viaduct. To get the best view, sit on the right of the train as you face the front on the outward journey.

The car park by the station, known as Great Eastern Square, is free.

Terrain: Easy.

There are only four styles and two gentle uphill climbs. If there has been recent rain, the stretch along the dyke between Felixstowe Ferry and the turnoff along Kings Fleet can be muddy and quite slippery and the stretch across the cultivated fields can be rather damp. In any case, boots or good walking shoes are recommended.

Distance: 7.9 miles.

This can be shortened to 5.3 miles by taking the bus to Felixstowe Ferry. The buses to Felixstowe Ferry are not very frequent so it is best to check with the Felixstowe Tourist Information regarding the times.

Points of Interest: (all in a single walk)

Introduction to the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Path (SCHP)

Coastal Scenery

The Deben Estuary

A historic waterway.

The Suffolk countryside

Detail

From the station to the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Path

Leave the station and walk on as if the railway lines continued, which in fact they used to do, through a large car park. This area is known as Great Eastern Square. Pass through the old station buildings which form part of the Great Eastern shopping precinct. If this is closed, there is an opening to the left. The street in front of the old station buildings has a widened pavement where you will find the bus stop to Felixstowe Ferry. If you take the bus, jump to the section called "Felixstowe Ferry to Falkenham". Otherwise, turn right and cross the road at the pedestrian crossing then turn left back up the road to pass in front of the Hotel Elizabeth. At the roundabout, turn right along High Road East. Take the second turn to the right down Brook Lane and then immediately turn left to stay on Brook Lane. Continue to a fork in the road and keep left into Foxgrove Lane. Continue to the crossroads where cars would have to give way and go straight across into Golf Road. Although there is nothing to inform you, you are now on the Suffolk Coast and Heaths long distance path. (SCHP)

To Felixstowe Ferry

Walk on the right of Golf Road around a left hand bend and in front of a car park. Just after the car park, turn right down a footpath which leads in front of the public conveniences. Go straight forward between the beach huts and keep left where the path forks to descend the steps down to the promenade. Turn left and walk along the prom as signposted for the SCHP. Stay on the same level except for climbing only three steps where the huts protrude a little. The promenade becomes a path as it passes to the seaward side of the golf course and the Martello towers. At the first Martello tower, the impressive Bawdsey Manor can be seen straight ahead. Between the two Martello towers, you start to pass the sandbanks called The Knolls that mark the start of the mouth of the Deben. After the second Martello tower, the path narrows as it climbs on top of the dyke. You pass the Victoria Public House and the Ferry Boat Inn down to your left. It is difficult to imagine that the area was over five feet deep in water in the 1953 storms! Stay on top of the dyke as it bends inland opposite a bright yellow sign telling you to "Keep off the rocks". Pass the SCHP post and carefully descend the narrow steps to the road. If you do not wish to visit the Felixstowe Ferry area, go straight across the road onto a substantial path. Otherwise, turn right and in a short distance along the road you will find public conveniences (the last on the walk), information, and the bus stop back to Felixstowe. You will need to return to the path to continue the walk.

Felixstowe Ferry to Kings Fleet

For those of you who have caught the bus from Felixstowe, walk back along the road to just past the car park on the right and turn right onto a substantial path opposite some steps.

You have now left the sea front and are heading alongside the Deben estuary. After passing some rather untidy skeletons of boats and boat houses the path bends round to the left. At the end of the substantial path, turn right over a stile following the clearly marked SChP sign. Follow the path along the top of the dyke. On your left is a drainage channel on which there are usually some swans. We have been fortunate enough to see two of them flying which is an impressive sight. After crossing over a stile, the path bends sharp left and then sharp right. You then arrive at a signpost which gives you the options of either turning right to continue along the dyke towards Woodbridge or turning left down some steps to continue following the SChP.

To continue this walk, take this left turn and leave the Deben estuary behind. At the bottom of the steps, go straight ahead along a broad gravel path alongside the stretch of water known as Kings Fleet.

Kings Fleet

Before the dyke walls that you have just walked along were completed around the mid 16th century, this area was covered with water and it was a strategic port called Goseford Haven. At that time, Falkenham and Kirton were more-or-less on the edge of the water. In 1338, the fleet of King Edward III assembled here before sailing to defeat the French in 1340. The name was changed to Kings Fleet after the dyke walls were built to form the much narrower channel you see now. The word "fleet" in Suffolk means "shallow". It is now a haven for water fowl such as swans, geese, moorhens and coots.

To Lower Falkenham

Stay on the track as it veers away from the waterway and starts to climb gently, eventually becoming a tarmac road. Continue along the road to the first right junction down to Lower Falkenham. On your left, opposite this junction is a signposted path across a cultivated field. Leave the SChP by taking this path, walking in single file to cause minimum disturbance.

The return to the station

Cross a second cultivated field as you descend into a valley and enter a long, narrow copse, called The Wilderness, through which Falkenham brook flows. Cross the brook and turn left at the signpost to walk along the path just inside the copse. Pass a picturesque pond on your left, taking note of the reflections of surrounding shrubs in the water. Continue along the path until you come to a stile next to a gate. After crossing the stile, follow the direction indicated by the signpost to a corner. Turn right around the corner and follow the field boundary as indicated by another signpost. At the next corner of the field, cross over a stile and then a footbridge over the now much narrower Kings Fleet. Then follow another signposted path along the edge of the field. Turn left around the field corner and follow the next edge of the field, noting the red Brick Kiln cottages up the hill to your right. At the other end of the field, turn right to take the track up the hill to the right of the cottages. At the top, follow the track round to the left. On your left, take in the pleasant view of the Kings Fleet valley and Felixstowe Ferry area. You now meet Gulpher Road at a sharp bend. Go straight forward and pass the 18C Gulpher Hall on your left. Follow the road round to the right and at the next bend to the left just after some cottages, follow the signposted footpath to the right as it drops down from the road. The path follows the stream as it gently winds across the fields. Then it enters into a wooded area at a sharp left hand bend. Take the path through the wood, keeping the stream on your right. Continue forward through the wood, called The Grove, ignoring turns to the left and the right, until you arrive at an iron gate with a way through for pedestrians on its right. Pass through this and walk up the road to the roundabout. Carefully go straight on at the roundabout into Beatrice Avenue (As most of the traffic comes from Ipswich and turns right, it may be easier to go round the left hand side of the roundabout). Walk down this road to the next roundabout and go straight ahead again to arrive at the Great Eastern shopping precinct on your right. Pass through the precinct back to the station.

References

The Suffolk Coast, Russell Edwards, The Lavenham Press Ltd., 1991

Ordnance Survey map Explorer 197, Ipswich, Felixstowe & Harwich. 1999

Editor: My thanks to Sue and Jim Stacey for this interesting walk, one of a series they are preparing for The Tattler. Do contact me if you have any queries or suggestions. If you want the map in colour - much easier to read - look on Tattler website: www.tuddenhamtattler.com